

“A Handshake or a Kiss”: The Legacy of George Stoney (1916–2012)

Brian Winston



George Stoney in 2009 during an interview conducted by documentarian David Bangall. Inishmor, Aran Islands, Ireland. Photo courtesy of David Bangall

The logs of history move—as ever nudged by death—and George Stoney, who died in 2012 at age 96, finally begins to take his proper place as a key figure in the development of post–World War II Anglophone documentary. Stoney, better than any other single figure, bridges the traditional Griersonian world of documentary film production and the current digital democratization of the documentary. His career was protean—seventy years as a distinguished documentary filmmaker, the doyen of American film teachers, and above all, the man who saw and explored the

potential of film and then video as agents of social change: an activist. Yet in the growing literature on documentary, Stoney remains a somewhat marginal figure. For example, although a Festschrift in his honor appeared in *Wide Angle*, there is still no book devoted to him or his work.¹ Perhaps Bonnie Sherr Klein, an ex-Stanford student of his, holds the key to this when she said of him: “George Stoney loves film but he loves people more.”²

Stoney was an astonishing man, exemplary in his generosity as a teacher, finally leaving his classroom at the NYU film school in his ninety-fifth year; but film professors are—largely—without honor. His first documentary of note is an exceptional, wonderfully humanistic training film for African-American midwives in the South, *All My Babies* (1951).³ However, his traditional approach to

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documentary became suspect and despised between the 1960s and 1980s—the decades of Direct Cinema’s dominance, with its austere observational, supposedly non-intervention *dogme*. Stoney resisted its seductions and, in the face of no little hostility, he insisted on the continued value of the Flaherty/Grierson template. In his seventy-ninth year, 1995, he was still proving his point. For his eighty-ninth title, he christened the largest wave of strikes in American history (in the Depression-era cotton mills of the Southeast) *The Uprising of ’34*, an account of which he then videotaped.⁴ The film enabled communities that had buried memories of their resistance to exploitation and violence to recover their history and their pride. Rare though it was in its local impacts, *The Uprising of ’34* received no nods from the Emmys or other canonizing organizations. As with teaching, films made in such an old-fashioned mode for such unfashionably engaged reasons are also—largely—without honor.

But then Stoney wanted no honor in that sense. Deirdre Boyle reports that, when once asked how he wished to be remembered, he replied: “as a very happy collaborator.”⁵ And this is the final factor contributing to his marginalization. The cinema pantheon has little space—and less honor—for players who provide “assists.” George Stoney’s major accomplishment was, arguably, to do just this: “assist.” His greatest role was to “make the play” for all those he enabled, directly and indirectly, to speak for themselves via video as well as for the generations of his students, many of whom became his collaborators. “George gave me the camera” is their mantra and it explains why, despite his self-effacement, his few obituaries nevertheless spoke of him as a major pioneer—indeed the “father”—of public access cable television. Or, even in the opinion of ex-FCC Commissioner Nick Johnson, possibly the “father of YouTube.”⁶

Stoney had his own view of such encomia: “Paternity is easy to ascribe and difficult to deny.”⁷ Martin Lucas, an ex-NYU Stoney student, would also take issue with Johnson’s sobriquet:

I’d like to rescue George from YouTube. . . . It seems as though the web of media arts centers, access stations and production groups (like *Paper Tiger*) that are substantially his legacy, represented (and still to some extent do represent) a shared culture that web-based media platforms are not in a good position to further.⁸

In fact, I take this concern about contextualizing Stoney the activist by technologies further yet, disputing Klein’s opinion. Yes—for sure—Stoney “loved people.” He was

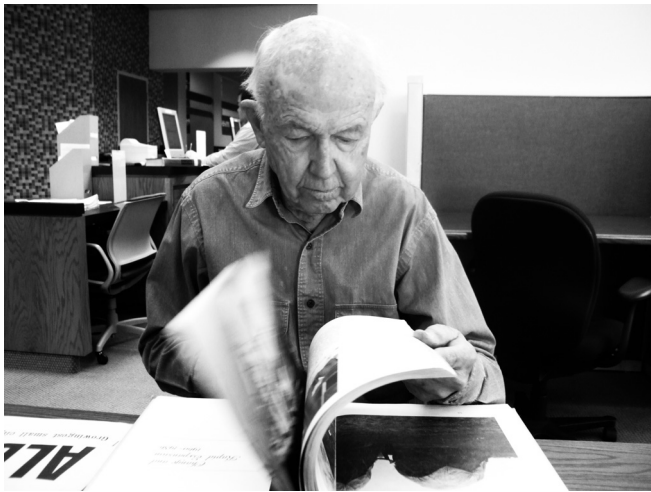
a man of breathtaking humanity, warmth, and (as Boyle well notes) modesty. All this talk of personal impact, legacy, and importance would profoundly disinterest him. But, *qua* Klein, I query whether he even liked film. He always said he thought it an unfriendly, inaccessible technology—hating the fuss of cinematography, the waiting for rushes, and so on.⁹

Rather, then, what must be noted is that more was at stake in his project than some already bypassed—or even futuristic—media platform. George loved people more. He told an interviewer in 1985: “The last thing I want to do is develop media to get in the way of person-to-person interchange because . . . I think all communication should end with either a handshake or a kiss.”¹⁰

Stoney’s grail was participation. The key pregnant moment in his biography is thus not whether he “fathered” this media platform or that. Nor is to be found in any of the documentaries he wrote, produced, and/or directed over the six-plus decades of his filmmaking; nor even in his stellar (and nearly equally long) career as an educator. It is the moment he starts to cross the bridge from conventional documentary filmmaking in any of its established modes into the participatory, the most salient and significant potentiality of today’s “documedia.” That journey began in earnest at the National Film Board of Canada in 1968 when Stoney became the executive producer of its Challenge for Change program of overtly activist documentary production. It was in Montreal that he first glimpsed the possibilities of the moving image as a tool for social activism, not in the hands of engaged filmmakers such as himself (that was who he was, that he knew about). There his thinking began to coalesce around the idea that the media ought to be a tool for the documentary subject—for the people themselves. And that insight is the source for Johnson’s hyperbole.

This article thus revisits that moment and its sequel, the campaign for cable access channels in the United States that Stoney, Johnson, and others took up after Stoney returned to New York in 1970.¹¹ I now add to that with corroborating documentation gleaned from a (very) preliminary trawl through Stoney’s paper archive—a massive collection of documents that have become available with his death.

George Stoney died on July 12, 2012, in Manhattan, leaving a huge collection of video access materials as well as some eight thousand carbon copies of letters and other writings dating back to the 1920s. The papers were found in the filing cabinets in George’s final narrow little office at NYU. In the preceding May, those around him, his



George Stoney conducting his own archival research. Photo courtesy of David Bangall

daughter Louise and others, had asked me to ensure that this precious cache of materials would become known in the academic community.¹² Let me add a personal note. The cache of papers answers one minor mystery about George: why would somebody so sensitive to the social implications of new communications technologies persist in using one—the typewriter—first patented in 1714? This thought increasingly occurred to me in the forty-one years of our acquaintance every time a typed communication arrived with an ever-greater number of smudged letters caused by damaged keys—especially after the last guy in New York to repair typewriters disappeared from view several years ago. Now I know the answer—George was making carbon copies. Consider this article, then, a glimpse of carbons yet to come.

“Films designed to promote social change”

George Stoney was drafted into the USAAF (US Army Air Forces) in 1942, serving in the 107th Tactical Reconnaissance Unit and the 360th Photoreconnaissance Unit in the United Kingdom. In the years immediately before this, Stoney had used Pare Lorentz’s *The River* (1938) as a tool to open conversations at rural community meetings in the South that were organized by Roosevelt’s Farm Settlement Administration, for which he worked—so that was enough, probably, for the Army to associate him with photography. In fact, he had been charged with the forbidding task of building white support for black sharecropper voter registration. *The River*—although essentially a classic “problem moment” documentary, infused with a punch-pulling Southern take on US history—gave him a way into

penetrating prejudices during post-screening discussions. For Stoney, these were as important as the screening itself. For him, it was the combination that demonstrated the power of film as a tool of communication preparatory to social activism. Now, in London, with the bombs falling, he was still concerned with images—albeit stills—and how they might also be put to use.

Back in the United States after the war, Stoney became a successful filmmaker himself. The small independent sponsored-film production company he then established was not without distinction. *All My Babies*, for example, received a rare accolade for a training film when it was selected for the 1952 Edinburgh Film Festival.¹³ But it was the creation of discernable social value—improved mother and infant survival rates, in this case—that mattered to Stoney, not the geegaws of public recognition. He was determined to explore this potential through the agency of sponsored film. Yet he was by no means blind to the restrictions imposed by funders who did not necessarily share his ambitions.¹⁴

The flow of sponsored work did not falter as he began to teach at Stanford in the mid-1960s. It was to be ex-Stanford student Sherr Klein, now moved on to the National Film Board of Canada, who suggested that he apply for a position there in 1968 as a film producer. Specifically, the NFB was looking for somebody to run a recently introduced, but faltering, documentary production program overtly designed to address social problems and encourage change, Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle. In his application for the job, remarkably preserved in draft in his archive, Stoney was able to stress a continuous record of positive socially concerned credits.¹⁵

While none have doubted the importance of the NFB, I still believe it has yet to receive proper recognition outside of Canada as one of documentary’s crucial institutions—certainly as important to documentary development as that other production unit founded by John Grierson at the British General Post Office. In fact, the NFB arguably makes a better case for Grierson’s legacy than does the GPO, but instead the board is seen, as Tom Waugh and Ezra Winton have argued, as “Grierson’s little colonial branch-plant that could.”¹⁶ Its role in the development of 16 mm sound technology and how to use it was decisive—from Michel Brault’s pioneering *Les Raquetteurs* (NFB, Canada, 1958) through Terry McCartney-Filgate’s presence on *Primary* (Robert Drew and Richard Leacock, Drew Associates/Time, USA, 1960) to *Chronique d’un été* (Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin,¹⁷ Argos Films, France, 1960, shot in part by Brault) and *Lonely Boy* (Wolf Koenig and

Roman Kroiter, NFB, Canada, 1961). And after all the technology and production, it was there at the film board at the end of the 1960s that the first steps toward a fundamental rethinking of the documentary film director's role were undertaken.

Stoney's application worked, and he found himself at the center of a vibrant debate about the nature of documentary. Three events—three films—impacted his thinking. Established NFB documentarist Colin Low had gone to Newfoundland in 1967 to direct a Griersonian social-victim film but instead found himself renegotiating the relationship between filmmaker and subject. Lending his talents to a fishing community on the offshore Fogo Island, Low made a filmed case on the islanders' behalf and at their direction designed specifically to stop an otherwise unresponsive provincial government from forcibly evicting them and depopulating the island.¹⁸

For the documentarist, the need for the rebalancing of power between filmmaker and subject was becoming ever more pressing because of the increased flexibility of the equipment. The Direct Cinema movement luxuriated in intrusion, but the fact that this might deepen ethical concerns was by no means obvious to filmmakers. Frederick Wiseman expressed the standard view at the time: "I couldn't make a film which gave someone else the right to control the final print."¹⁹ Low, in elaborating what came to be called the "Fogo Process," was arguing, in effect, exactly the opposite, as Stoney would soon do as well: that the traditional documentary 'subjects' ought to be trained to make their own films by the professionals, not merely perform in front of their cameras. Apart from the common social-victim themes—the disadvantaged—in his application form, he had also mentioned the need, as he saw it, for participatory "testing" (that is getting audience response and involvement)—both before and after the film was released.²⁰

This "testing," although not unique, is in the same participatory direction of travel as Low's emerging production protocols. In Canada, Stoney would follow his instincts to realize that the surrender of direct directorial control to his subjects was the only logical endpoint. As he was to tell Alan Rosenthal, he reached the conclusion that he had spent much of his life "making films about doctors or teachers or preachers that these people should have made themselves."²¹

The second film in Stoney's in-tray as he arrived at the NFB was *The Things I Cannot Change* (Tanya Ballentyne, 1967). Stoney's predecessor, Frank Kemeny, had commissioned a film on urban poverty, funded in part by the

Canadian Privy Council, as a precursor to the Challenge for Change project. According to Brenda Longfellow's account, it had been screened, unusually for an NFB film, "with incredible fanfare" on CBC in the spring of 1967.²² Although certainly no celebration of what Joris Ivens once called "exotic dirt," the film still presented a searing picture of the condition of the urban underclass.²³ Longfellow, however, takes issue with the popularized story about its reception, according to which the neighbors of the documentary's central family were supposedly so upset by the exposure of the community that their cooperation with the filmmakers had occasioned that the family were forced to move away.²⁴ Reportedly, the NFB then decided to reconsider its consent procedures.

In her meticulous analysis of the production context and reception of the film, Longfellow suggests that this is something of an exaggeration, including the assertion that this caused the board to rethink the whole issue of filmmaker responsibility. Be that as it may, the controversy over the film highlighted the dangers of addressing the mass audience on behalf of Griersonian social victims. In that, *The Things I Cannot Change* was the obverse of the Fogo films.

Such uproars led Stoney to conclude: "People should do their own filming, or at least feel they control the content."²⁵ However, even this last was hard in the usual "non-Fogo" director/subject relationship. For subjects actually to do the filming for themselves without considerable training was impossible, given the complexity of the process in the pre-digital universe. Filming was always getting in the way.

The third film in Stoney's in-tray, *You Are on Indian Land* (Mort Ransen, NFB, Canada, 1969), directly addressed this problem. With the not entirely helpful support of the Department of Indian Affairs, a First Nations film crew had been trained as professional filmmakers, and *You Are on Indian Land* became the first Fogo Process documentary to result. Again, it was made in the dominant observational Direct Cinema mode to chronicle a protest that closed the road joining the United States and Canada via a bridge across the St. Lawrence, which traversed First Peoples' land. But the film was no mere news story. Unlike *The Things...* (but like most of the Fogo titles) it had a targeted audience: First Nations peoples never before had been addressed by a film made by their own.²⁶ Both the Fogo films and *The Things...* were conventional in that they were made by film professionals. *You Are on Indian Land* was also made by professionals, but these were First Nations people especially trained for the job. So the film was not only made *for* its subjects in a targeted

fashion, it was made *by* its (admittedly highly professionalized) subjects as well, according to the Fogo Process.

Such, then, is the context in which Stoney began his work as the Challenge for Change producer.

“Eliminate the ‘middlemen’—the filmmakers”

The freshness of the issue before Stoney was not so much a matter of topics or tone, where the image of the Griersonian victim still dominated. Nor did it involve a new aesthetic: Direct Cinema, now a decade old, was the preferred mode. Rather, what was new was the application of a new sensitivity to the relationship of filmmaker and subject and a sense that a targeted audience was more important than a mass one.

A film project was suggested to Stoney early on: a look at welfare recipients, not as Griersonian/Wisemanian figures of helpless social victims, but rather, as with Fogo, to allow them to voice their complaints as prisoners of a debasing and insensitive system. Terry McCartney-Filgate shot the austere *Up Against the System* (NFB, Canada, 1969), giving complainants an unimpeded opportunity to illuminate what it felt like to be a recipient of welfare. Apart from the usual general distribution as an amorphous consciousness-raising exercise, the film was shown at regional staff meetings of welfare officials all across Canada.²⁷ It was a re-education meant to materially change their view and improve their behavior toward their clients.

None of this was a smooth process. There were frictions with the Francophone *Équipe* of the NFB/ONF. Stoney outraged both sides of the linguistic divide by suggesting a bilingual crew. He also earned the enmity of his Francophone secretary who was “spying” on him on their behalf. (She was transferred.) His preference for “testing” also brought him into conflict with the distribution department. Above all, projects such as *Up Against the System* scarcely endeared the NFB to the government bureaucrats whose deficiencies were exposed. Enmity cannot have been but exacerbated by the fact that the critical films were, after all, emanating from a government-funded entity. Stoney’s paper archive confirms all this but adds personal color to the account. For Stoney, who wrote to everybody all the time, being in Canada did not mean that his flow of letters abated. He was assiduous throughout his life in keeping in touch with a wide network of friends, colleagues, acquaintances, and all of his family, including his (ex-)wife, her parents, his children, and his sister.

It is in the family correspondence in fact that one starts to get a feel for the context—the by no means entirely

supportive situation—in which the Challenge for Change work (which must now be considered canonical) was being undertaken. Here, for example, is an excerpt from a letter to his sister Elizabeth Segal, “Libba,” written in December 1968, which gives Stoney’s contemporary reading of the Franco/Anglo chasm at the board:²⁸

In the same letter, Stoney explains the nature of the problem with the NFB’s Distribution Department. The film in question was *Christopher’s Movie Matinee* (1968), directed in Fogo style at the behest of a group of teenagers by Mort Rasen. That it lasted a feature-length 88 minutes, long for an NFB documentary at that time, did not help endear it to Distribution.

Nevertheless, these early months were as energizing as they were infuriating. Stoney was enthused by his own challenges in running the project. The clouds though were permanent.

The real problem came to turn on the business of who actually, in any conventional traditional sense, was making the “films.” Skilled technical effort was still very much in play even when the subjects got control of the cameras, as with the teenagers or the Mohawk unit, but as Dorothy Todd Hénaut recalled:^{29,30}

At Challenge for Change, we were wracking our brains to find a way to eliminate the “middlemen”—the filmmakers—and put the cameras directly in the hands of ordinary people. Unfortunately, working with even the light, 16 mm cameras took years of apprenticeship. We experimented with slide shows and 8 mm film, but they were awkward, and of limited usefulness as a communication tool.³¹

The answer, of course, was already at hand in the NFB equipment storehouse. On a visit to New York, Robert Forget, a member of the Francophone *Équipe*, had acquired a reel-to-reel “home video” Portapak more or less as it first hit the stores in 1967. Klein and Todd Hénaut became aware of its presence in Montreal in the fall of 1968 and determined to experiment with it—but not by using it themselves. Hénaut remembers:

Bonnie Klein and I wanted to experiment with this new equipment, by putting it in the hands of a Montreal citizens’ committee, to see if they would be able to use it themselves. George Stoney immediately recognized the usefulness of this innovative idea, and backed us up totally. He pulled portable cameras and editing decks out of a hat, and we asked the Comité des Citoyens de St-Jacques if they would be interested in learning to use this new communication tool.

60. STATE BRIEFLY HOW YOUR TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE HAVE PREPARED YOU FOR THE POSITION FOR WHICH YOU HAVE APPLIED

Since 1946 when I began writing scripts ~~and then as a writer~~ for the Southern Educational Film Production Service ~~at the Univ. of Georgia under the guidance of Film Board trained Nicholas Read~~ I have spent the ~~bulk of my professional life in making~~ ~~designed to promote social change.~~ My list of productions include films about the police (5 in number), urban planning (an 8 part series for Amer. television), the disadvantaged (Negroes, Appalachians, the physically handicapped), ~~educational reform...~~ ~~topics~~ entirely being explored by the Challenge for Change. ~~Since '50 I have been wholly responsible for the financial and administrative problems involved in these productions as well as the aesthetic ones.~~ Since 1956 I have devoted a considerable part of my time to teaching and working with graduate students making thesis films. This has ~~required me to develop an open, permissive yet guiding approach to young filmmakers and their fresh ideas.~~

Canada employment application¹⁵

59. USE SPACE BELOW TO ENLARGE UPON STATEMENTS MADE ON PRECEDING PAGES, IF NECESSARY

Whenever possible I have also helped ~~develop~~ ~~plans for the pre-release testing of such films,~~ ~~(insisting on this~~ ~~being included as a budgeted item for most of my more recent productions)~~ and for subsequent release and distribution. the preparation of auxiliary materials (teachers guides, etc.)

Canada employment application²⁰

Incidentally, I've made quite a name for myself here by persuading French cameramen and sound men to work on two of my English productions, and ~~to launch~~ a completely French-speaking film (now in shooting) being directed by Bonnie Sherr Klein with another entirely French crew but designed for English audiences as its primary release. Now I have clear and from the top to send a French crew out to do a film about a community organization out in the Prairies, an obvious approach no one seems ever to have dared suggest before. Now I find the crew I want to go (because they've done such a beautiful job on a community organization film here in Quebec) is actually afraid to take on the job. They're all bilingual. They're all University trained. Most of them have traveled in Europe. None has ever been west of Toronto and their suspicions about the Canadians "out there" seem quite ludicrous, they do to me.

To Elizabeth Segal ("Libba"), December 4, 1968²⁸

The fact that the old hands in Distribution so dislike the film (are so ashamed of the film...it does that to people over 30 I've observed) that an entirely different method of distribution is having to be worked out has made it a 'cause celebre'. But I don't think that has made much difference to the response among the filmmakers, for they are used to Distribution's skepticism about the new in any film. ... Now that I've seen "Christopher" I can recognize it as the top of a trend that began in French unit productions half a dozen years ago, a tendency to personal indulgence of a seemingly trivial mood or detail of life or character or visual pattern. I wish I knew current drama better for there must be parallels. ... Having said that I must also say that by far the most original work being done at NFB now is produced by the French unit.

To Elizabeth Segal ("Libba"), December 4, 1968²⁸

It's an incredible place to work. How the hell anyone gets anything done I don't know. And yet the good films keep coming out. Maybe I'll know the secret before I leave.

Love,



To Elizabeth Segal ("Libba"), November 15, 1968²⁹

Life continues to be full to running over up here. Our program is going at top speed. ~~Every~~ Every day there's a crisis and the whole thing could collapse around my ears if there are too many political "happenings" at once. But I figure I'm up here to do a job called "Challenge for Change" and if they don't want it done they shouldn't have anything with that label on it. Most of my colleagues agree.

To Elizabeth Segal ("Libba"), January 26, 1969³⁰

I've had an exchange of letters with Phyllis R. about our "Attitude of Relief Recipients" film which is now in production in Toronto with Terry Filgate in charge. We're calling it "Up Against the System" and from the rushes I'd say Terry is doing his usual strong, imaginative job. We've so many strong films in production now. Bonnie's film about the French community organization in St. Jacques (a poor area in downtown Montreal) ~~is also moving well~~ is also moving well and Pier Lasry's film about "One Parent Families" is -- given his imaginative editing -- overcoming most of the mistakes made in the shooting and had me crying in front of the moviola night before last.

To Elizabeth Segal ("Libba"), January 26, 1969³⁰

I'm fine. Things are going furiously at the Film Board. We had a terrific show of all the Indian Film Crew work in Ottawa a couple of weeks ago, a full house with lots of top brass from the government there as well as lots of college kids. Willie Dunn sang "live" before the screening of Crowfoot, the first film on the program, which knocked them all out. Roy Daniels, back from Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories, was MC and did a beautiful job. Mike Mitchell was in California but was well represented by his performance in You Are On Indian Land.

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To James Stoney ("Jamie"), October 19, 1969³⁴

As you may remember, I came to the Film Board on a two year contract, firmly determined that I should remain for two years, no more and no less. I'm glad I did this for the temptation to hold on here is tremendous. I felt it particularly when I went back to the States for a week, just passed. The atmosphere in Washington was so depressing I was pleased I was staying with Lib and Ben and their very bright children. To be brief, most of my friends feel that whatever they are doing will have little impact on the direction of the country. Nothing will happen until "the left burns the place down and the right shoots them for it." In my own field there is a good bit of financial support available for people like me who can create the illusion of action...to serve as window dressing. But no one takes it seriously. By comparison Canada seems a haven of sanity and hope.

To Edna and James Bruce ("Matron" and "Prof"), October 31, 1969³⁶

My program, along with the whole Film Board, has been hit by a series of economy waves and administrative goofs that will do permanent damage to this wonderful institution if something ~~isn't~~ isn't done quickly. I spend most of my time guarding the flock, fighting for money, fighting to keep projects from being turned into gimmicky P.R. instead of gutsy investigations of social ills. Thus far I'm on top, though I could be sent packing across the border at any moment. Sometimes I get terribly discouraged, thinking, "For the love of heaven, did I come to the Film Board for THIS kind of crap?"

To Elizabeth Segal ("Libba"), October 5, 1969³⁷

856 Plymouth Ave.
TMR, Montreal 306
P.Q., Canada
July 12th/69

Dear Mary,

All kinds of political problems are keeping me in Montreal this week-end....we've another presentation to Cabinet on Monday; an all-day meeting and battle with the Company of Young Canadians for the freedom of our Indian Film Crew on Tuesday; a campaign for funds that involves a joint project with External Aid, the Ford Foundation and NFB on Wednesday...with internal (NFB) politics to handle in between. Lordy I never expected to be into this kind of thing. But it's interesting and a few good films are getting made in spite of the crap.

To Mary Stoney (née Bruce), July 12, 1969³⁸

At the Film Board we have our little disputes over this and that but in general feelings are so muted, pleasant, accommodating and civilized that working there is like a summer's dream. Ultimately I find I can't believe it's important however much evidence I see on my field trips that there is a great need here, too, and that we are beginning to get some action. Maybe that's really why I feel I must come back home.

Anyway, the decision is made.

To Mary, May 10, 1970⁴⁰



NATIONAL FILM BOARD • OFFICE NATIONAL DU FILM

P.O. Box 6100, Montreal 101,
October 15th, 1970.

Mr. George Stoney,
240 Waverly Place,
New York, N.Y. 10014,
U. S. A.

Dear George:

Just to confirm our discussion over the telephone in which we agreed that your last working day at the Film Board was September 1st, 1970.

I want to take this opportunity to put down a few of my thoughts concerning your tenure with the Challenge for Change program. You joined the Board at a very difficult period in its history and took over the administration of the Challenge for Change program at a point when the very future of this activity was being questioned, yet we were able to give you very little opportunity to overlap with the outgoing producer, John Kemeny.

It is natural that every Challenge for Change producer will impart some of his own personal perception and influences on the direction of the program and I think your most remarkable contribution was the perspective you gave to the Challenge for Change staff in the matter of their relationships with the people they were serving. I think this influence has had important repercussions beyond Challenge for Change and many filmmakers have come to see the importance of observing the effects of their work on real life audiences and in helping them to genuinely accept that this process is a part of their development as responsible filmmakers.

To George Stoney, October, 15, 1970.⁴¹

Some day maybe we can have a "Challenge for Change-type" film effort back home. I keep nursing the idea, getting visitors up here to educate them (3 men from the Ford Foundation are up the week-end of the 17th; a delegation from NYU early in November) plotting with my newest colleague Walter Dale (a wonderful young U.S. school teacher with us for 4 months on a Ford Fellowship). We've finally persuaded CBC~~aa~~ to give us several prime time slots to demonstrate our method

To Elizabeth Segal ("Libba"), October 5, 1969⁴³

We're getting our version of "Challenge for Change" started with a series of tapes about housing in NYC, centering on some Puerto Ricans who have taken over "condemned" houses on the upper west side.

To James Stoney ("Jamie"), November 5, 1970

We're about to set up what we're calling an Alternate Media Center devoted mostly to the production of prototype programs for Cable. We won't be spending most of our time producing a new kind of package. Rather we will be making "for instance" programs with community groups, testing them out with the two cable systems in this area and then promoting the adoption of the ideas illustrated by other cable systems

To Dorothy Todd Hénaut, February 5, 1971⁴⁴

The "center" is in operation although we haven't as yet any of the usual requirements for an organization....no office or phone or stationary, though all this is in the works. We've done one tape for the FCC, part of a plea to legalize the use of half inch tape. We're into a big thing with parents at P.S. 41 in the village who are building up to a "charette" on Memorial Day weekend dealing with community control. They are using our porta-packs, editing with Woody and having some play-back sessions.

To Walter Dale, April 29, 1971⁴⁵

My own fortunes have taken a remarkably favorable turn. For we have just been given a grant of \$260,000 for two years by the Markle Foundation to start what we are calling an "Alternate Media Center" to produce prototype programs for cable television. It is the first link in my hoped-for "Challenge for Change" program in the U.S. to match the Canadian model. I never dreamed we'd be able to move so rapidly. Luck played a big part, plus a tremendous assist from an assistant, Mrs. Loyd Burns, who joined my staff last fall as a near volunteer (paid expenses only) after her husband died. He was head of a large TV packaging house so she knows the business from the inside and her help in working up projects has been invaluable.

To James and Edna Bruce ("Matron" and "Prof"), March 23, 1971⁴⁶



New York University
Interdepartmental Communication

Sept. 12th, 1983

Dear Red,

I note with dismay that the only course you are offering that deals with cable is taught by Jack Gault, a man who is publicly committed to destroying, or seriously hampering, all those uses of cable for which you and I fought so hard only a few years ago when we set up AMC together. Does this mean that AMC/ITP no longer has any interest in Public Access as you defined it in your ACCESS HANDBOOK in 1975?

To Mrs. "Red" Burns September 12, 1983.⁴⁷

To quote Sherr Klein: “Happily, George did impose one condition. ‘You can do this thing,’ he said, ‘but only if you document it on 16 mm film, because video is undistributable and the experience must be disseminated.’ The film was called *VTR St-Jacques* and disseminate it he did—the rest is the history of public access.”³²

The challenges of video were not limited to distribution and exhibition difficulties. As with the Griersonians and their long resistance to 16 mm film, there was a mind-set problem.³³ An enthusiastic embrace of the new was by no means in general evidence at the board. Rather, video—a technology marketed for “home” (or scarcely less worrying, “industrial”) use—was seen as a threat to film professionalism. In an institution whose very name was technologically limited—it was, after all, a *film* board, founded indeed by John Grierson himself—video was *prima facie* suspect. Naturally enough, given this context and the newness of the technology, it was easier still to be thinking in terms of films, such as the resulting *VTR St.-Jacques* (Bonnie Sherr Klein, 1969) and the other productions), the Fogo Process notwithstanding. To be able to talk in terms of titles was a protection and it also sustained Stoney’s enthusiasm. This mind-set persisted as projects came to fruition, and he was able to present a good face on the enterprise to his family into the second year of his contract. In the fall of 1969 he was writing to his son about this.³⁴

Nevertheless, in the letters, such positives were in constant contrast to reports of the stresses of the situation. These were not all a consequence of internal problems at the board, from its bureaucratic mind-set to the linguistic divide. Also in play were the political ambitions of the Challenge for Change project, indeed the reasons for its formation in the first place. These were a reflection of a zeitgeist that included the tense Canadian politics of the time. Francophone separatists were rioting in Quebec, the charismatic Francophone Pierre Trudeau was elected prime minister, and the governance of the First Nations was being controversially reorganized. Canada was far from immune to the societal forces that were in play across the West: the struggles for rights—for women, for ethnic and sexual identities; the fight against capital; and, above all, the war in Vietnam, the impact of which was nearly as profound north of the 49th parallel as south.³⁵ Still, for Stoney, the Canadian situation overall was preferable to the divisive conditions in play to the south. To his ex-in-laws, he wrote in October 1969 an explanation of why Canada, despite everything, remained preferable to the United States. The observation had been provoked by a visit to Libba and her husband, Ben Segal, in Washington.³⁶

Hope and sanity were not that much in evidence at the board, however. For one thing, inevitably, for a tax-funded organization with ambitions to effect social change of an often oppositional nature, pressures on the budget—always a threat to any organization in hock to the state—were increasing. At the end of his first year, even as he was being upbeat to Jamie, Stoney shared a different perspective with Libba.³⁷

This included the kind of “crap” he was used to as independent producer: looking for money. Despite being funded by the Canadian taxpayer, the NFB was not as stable financially as might be expected. Stoney found himself being directly involved in campaigning not only to protect his productions but also to help diversify the board’s revenue sources.³⁸

This is not at all surprising; but it should not be forgotten that, beyond budget cuts, systemic bureaucratic foul-ups and some films still recognizable as such, Stoney was now actually presiding over a “rewriting of the book” on what NFB management traditionally considered to be the means of fulfilling its public remit.

The National Film Board had been established, under Grierson’s guidance on the eve of World War II, to make films “to interpret Canada to Canadians and to other nations.”³⁹ More and more, Stoney’s effort was to encourage work unrecognizable to a Griersonian. Instead of films, made to acceptable levels of professional “standards,” the template was now *VTR St-Jacques*. Thus Challenge for Change was increasingly providing only “poor quality” videos made by amateurs (as any Griersonian would see it). The management’s distress was therefore not entirely unwarranted. Challenge for Change was not, after all, a program that had been designed to change documentary, nor to rethink its norms, but, in effect, that is what it came to be doing. As its focus moved more and more to community video, the NFB management was increasingly anxious about what actual *films* were going to emerge. Stoney had no immediate answers to this. As he once told me, he was simply having to insist to his bosses that “he did not know” as the Portapak video projects all over Canada were in the hands of the people involved, not his.

The need to placate funders (aka NFB’s management) did not dampen what was to become for Stoney a positively evangelical commitment to the use of video; not, of course, as a technology but, rather, as the tool needed for democratizing documentary production in the name of social activism. This was a task worth any number of irritations. By the spring of 1970, however, the brave face was masking disillusion.⁴⁰

His contract would not be renewed. That fall, George Stoney and the NFB parted ways. The usual emollient face was put on this: the man who had brought him to Canada two years earlier, Frank Spiller, the head of English Production at the board, wrote a soothing cover letter.⁴¹

The country to which Stoney returned in 1970 was rocked by social change, its calm further fractured by continued divisions over the war in Vietnam. Even without his long history of social engagement, Stoney would not want to avoid being a participant in the situation in the United States. As he had written to his ex-in-laws, he knew that American funds were available to pursue a role as an activist, however much long experience had taught him that the political effect of any such media action was likely illusionary. As a result, he was not so committed to Canada that his leaving was distressing. Nevertheless, there can be little question that the board was not happy with the direction he had taken the Challenge for Change project. Spiller might have recognized that Stoney had effected a sea change on the concept of the director's role that would eventually have repercussions for documentary far beyond the NFB. But the lack of product in a recognizable form was a stumbling block. Terry McCartney-Filgate is certain that he was denied the job as George's successor exactly because he was just as committed to video, the Fogo Process, and social activism as George had been, and that the board had had enough of that.⁴² As for George, he was by now halfway across the bridge from traditional filmmaker to participatory access and beyond.

"A Challenge for Change-type film effort back home"

George Stoney returned to New York City and was hired to head the undergraduate program at New York University's film school. He also resumed his career as an independent documentary filmmaker—a combination of teaching and practice that he had developed in the 1950s. But now, additionally, he had an ambition that could not be fulfilled by either of these roles: how to establish a Challenge for Change project in the United States. This was to be the biggest challenge he brought back from Canada, and he had been thinking about it for some time.⁴³

The Portapak made the rethinking of documentary's basic protocols easier—it made such a project viable—but Stoney knew full well that a National Film Board of the United States was an impossibility. He was well aware of the frictions the Rooseveltian Film Service had caused in the 1930s. The hostility of Hollywood to any tax-funded

rival fueled atavistic Republican distrust of such government initiatives. First Amendment sensitivities were also in play. And this was before even considering the essentially oppositional, participatory, and empowering agenda of a Challenge for Change. Stoney, however, hit upon a scheme. Martin Lucas, the ex-NYU Stoney student mentioned earlier, points up the discontinuities involved looking forward to Stoney as the "father of YouTube"—but there is another discontinuity: backwards from community cable television to the NFB. Arguably, Stoney conceived of the cable access channels as being, exactly, the nearest he could get to a film board dedicated to distributing and exhibiting social activist materials. In this way, not only would the citizenry be given a voice, but citizens would speak directly to each other and to power through access to technology, training, and distribution.

The Portapak was the key. People could be trained to use a 16 mm Arriflex BL or an Éclair—that had been proved at the NFB—but the technology was forbidding and prohibitively expensive. Portapaks were neither: they were accessible and comparatively cheap; and their efficacy in the hands of "amateurs" for the purposes of social communication had also been proved at the board. As he began work at NYU, he of course introduced video into the classroom. Stoney, though, self-deprecatingly as usual, suggested that any one of a number of his colleagues could have done the same. The pedagogical advantages of video for documentary work were that glaringly obvious. Less so was how to extend the technology for the purposes of community activism, to more effectively involve the general public in the democratic process. He figured out that student use of video could be the first step.

Within weeks of the start of the academic year he was writing to Jamie.

Within months, this was coalescing into the idea of a center and he was writing to Dorothy Todd Hénaut.⁴⁴

Two months later he was telling the ex-NFB colleague he had mentioned to Libba, Walter Dale, that the center was up and running. He was able to move so fast because, as he explained to his ex-in-laws, he had what he described as "a remarkably favorable turn."^{45,46}

The money allowed Stoney and "Mrs. Loyd Burns"—who would become the crucial figure, "Red" Burns—to re-create for him the same exciting environment as he had experienced with the Challenge for Change team. The new Alternate Media Center (AMC) therefore provides both the equipment and the skilled media operatives who could interact with community groups. As an established educational center within a university, it created a viable

revenue stream. Red's stellar fundraising skills augmented this to give the AMC a proper research dimension, although George came to feel that the research initiative, as encapsulated by the technicist Interactive Telecommunications Program that Red initiated, eventually overshadowed the activist dimension he had wanted to be central.⁴⁷

The activist agenda required the involvement of a third party—the cable industry—and it took George's considerable political skill to make this happen. The obstacles were daunting. For one thing, the FCC, which was still clinging to the remains of its traditional defense of its broadcasting licensees against the upstart cable companies, prohibited—spuriously—the transmission of one-half-inch videotape in the name of “standards.” One of Stoney's first actions at NYU was, therefore, to make (as he reports in the above-quoted letter to Dale) “one tape for the FCC, part of a plea to legalize half-inch tape.” Obviously, without the removal of this regulation, Stoney's entire strategy would be stymied.

That accomplished, the cable companies would still have to be persuaded to set aside valuable channels, *pro bono*, for community use. However, as they needed municipal licenses at this time to run their cables and get into business, “access” could be parlayed into a measure of PR advantage.

As Stoney began his campaign to co-opt some of the industry's channel capacity for social activism, cable already had some 5.2 million subscribers, 8.8% of homes with television. This increased to 16% in 1972, 21% in 1973, and 20% in 1974.⁴⁸ FCC regulation would be required to make a community access provision—using non-professional video—a legal requirement of any cabling license; while arguing in any and all available forums for this, Stoney found a crucial ally in Commissioner Nick Johnson. Appointed by President Johnson (no relation), Commissioner Johnson represented the ambition of that president's long-past “Big Society” into the era of Richard Nixon. He was more than happy to champion the cause of enhanced media in the name of social responsibility against the broadcasters; and he was happy to do so at what many cable operators would see as their expense.

Brighter industry minds, however, realized that they were being cast in the role of parasites by the broadcasters (and many on the commission and elsewhere in Washington), so there was a clear PR advantage in being involved in such a worthy business. Here then was another span to Stoney's bridge—from Challenge for Change through the AMC and its training and media center facilitation programs to the cable industry. The need for regulation advanced by Stoney was acknowledged by the FCC regulation of 1972 so that: “By 1980, an estimated 1300 of the

nations 4600 cable systems were offering some form of non-automated access. About 700 had local live programming of some type. About 500 systems offered public access, 500 offered educational access channels, and 340 provided government access.”⁴⁹ The provision of access had become an important part of the franchising process, as Patrick Parsons points out. It was a footnote to the development of the industry that represented in his view “very much a part of the utopian vision of cable.”⁵⁰ Stoney's vision of video and cable was always and inevitably utopianist. Nevertheless, he did astutely combine the training and production capabilities of the Alternate Media Center with the cable industry, which must have been startled to find itself cast in the role of providing a participatory exhibition environment.

Stoney pulled off the trick and found a way in the 1970s to duplicate the logics of Challenge for Change south of the 49th parallel. Of course, this was utopianist, as today's rhetoric of “documedia” is utopianist. And, of course, the AMC is no more, having metamorphosed into a more traditional university program. Cable television has been overlaid by satellite television just as it overlaid terrestrial broadcasting, and now satellite coexists with the Web. But these technological changes reveal exactly the continued relevance of George Stoney's work: that his legacy cannot be limited by technology is what renders it so important. His was the progressivist social agenda that lay behind the bridge-building of the late '60s. It led some in the documentary field and many more nonmedia people with whom they interacted in the early '70s away from the prior documentary tradition and its automatic claim on artistic privilege. Although that moment has largely passed, Stoney's concepts of the participatory suffuse progressive thinking about new documentary media to this day. The essence of that legacy is to insist that ends are more important than means, which is why Nick Johnson's blogged opinion that “George Stoney's contributions to American democracy deserve to be listed along with those of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison” is only just a tad hyperbolic.⁵¹ While it might be more honored in the breach than in the observance, George's desire that all communication should finish with a handshake or a kiss remains a crucial best hope.

Author's Note

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Notes

1. Barbara Abrash, Lynne Jackson, and Cara Mertes, eds., "A Festschrift in Honor of George Stoney," *Wide Angle* 21, no. 2 (1999). Articles on Stoney (e.g., by Deirdre Boyle and Alan Rosenthal) in this journal are reprinted in Thomas Waugh, Michael Brendan Baker, and Ezra Winton, eds., *Challenge for Change: Activist Documentary at the National Film Board of Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2010). Rosenthal also included interviews with Stoney, for whom he worked at the outset of his own filmmaking career, in his earlier books: *The New Documentary in Action* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 117–37; *The Documentary Conscience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 345–58.
2. Bonnie Sherr Klein, "Toasts and Tributes," in Abrash et al., "Festschrift," 154. Sherr Klein's credits as a documentary filmmaker include *VTR St-Jacques* (NFB, Canada, 1969) and *Not a Love Story* (NFB, Canada, 1981).
3. *All My Babies: A Midwife's Own Story* (54 mins, black and white, 35 mm), directed by George Stoney for the Georgia Department of Health.
4. *The Uprising of '34* (90 mins, video, 1995), directed by George Stoney, Judith Hefland, and Susan Rostock, ITVS, USA. For the impact of the film, see David Whiteman, "Impact of *The Uprising of '34*: A Coalition Model of Production and Distribution," *Jump Cut* 45 (2002), www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc45.2002/whiteman/. Stoney's filmography is complex. The calculation that this film is his eighty-ninth is achieved by counting all the italicized titles in Lynne Jackson, "Filmography," in Abrash et al., "Festschrift," 169–81.
5. Deirdre Boyle, "'O Lucky Man! George Stoney's Lasting Legacy," in Abrash et al., "Festschrift," 17.
6. Nick Johnson, "Did George Stoney Invent YouTube?" (2012), wacuity.patch.com/groups/nicholas-johnsons-blog/p/bp-did-george-stoney-invent-youtube.
7. Boyle, "O Lucky Man!"
8. Martin Lucas, private communication, November 10, 2013.
9. George Stoney, personal communication. (I first met George at a broadcasting symposium held in Manchester, UK, in 1973 and was honored to replace him at NYU during the sabbatical he took to make *Man of Aran: How the Myth Was Filmed* [1976].)
10. George Stoney, video interview, *Media Network Conference, New York University*, 1985 (Stoney Video Archive, uncatalogued).
11. Deirdre Boyle provided a valuable account of this period, gathered from interviews conducted with the major protagonists involved, in "O Canada! George Stoney's Challenge," in Abrash et al., "Festschrift," 49–59.
12. The videos are now held on Long Island and the papers at his alma mater, the University of North Carolina. Hence my two earlier presentations at Visible Evidence XIX (Canberra, 2012) and XX (Stockholm, 2013) upon which this paper is based. *Note*: The Stoney Papers have yet to be properly catalogued and therefore cannot be precisely referenced. Some, however, can be identified by scanned file tags.
13. Fifty years later, the film was included in the National Film Registry at the Library of Congress.
14. George was always uneasy about sponsorship—considering it the elephant in the corner of the Griersonian room—and he never tried to justify it as Grierson did as being superior to box office or a liberating source of funds. His view: "Every dollar that goes into the film is like a link in a chain that goes around your neck. It's that kind of dirty business finally"; Alan Rosenthal, "A Cry for Help: George Stoney, Writer-Director," in his *New Documentary in Action*, 128.
15. "Since 1946 when I began writing scripts for the Southern Education Film Production Service at the Univ. of Georgia under the guidance of Film Board trained Nicholas Read I have spent the bulk of my professional life in making films designed to promote social change. My list of productions include films about the police (5 in number), urban planning (an 8 part series for Amer. Television), the disadvantaged (Negroes, Appalachians, the physically handicapped), educational reform topics currently being explore by the Challenge for Change. Since '50 I have been wholly responsible for the financial and administrative problems involved in these productions as well as the aesthetic ones. Since 1956 I have devoted a considerable part of my time to teaching and working with graduate students making thesis films. This has required me to develop an open permissive yet guiding approach to young film makers and fresh ideas" (George Stoney, "National Film Board of Canada: Application for Employment"), tagged as "Canada Application for Employment (undated (draft??) 1968??: answer to question 60, p. 4."
16. Tom Waugh and Ezra Winton, "Challenges for Change: Canada's National Film Board," in *The Documentary Film Book*, ed. Brian Winston (London: BFI/Palgrave, 2013), 138–46, on 145.
17. Brault, imported to Paris, filmed much of *Chronique* on a prototype of André Coutant's breakthrough 16 mm silent-running Éclair camera.
18. Low made twenty-nine short films on Fogo Island, some for a general audience (e.g., *The Children of Fogo Island* [1967]) but many specifically offering alternatives to the proposed eviction, such as *Bill Crane Moves Away* (1967). Peter Weisner, "Media for the People: The Canadian Experiments with Film and Video in Community Development (1992)," in *Challenge for Change: Activist Documentary at the National Film Board of Canada*, ed. Thomas Waugh, Michael Brendan Baker, and Ezra Winton (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2010), 73–79, on 73.
19. Alan Rosenthal, "High School: Producer-Director Fred Wiseman," in his *New Documentary*, 66–75, on 71.
20. "Whenever possible I have also helped develop plans for pre-release testing of such films (insisting on this being included as a budgeted item for most of my more recent productions) and for subsequent release and distribution. the preparation of auxiliary materials (teachers guides, etc.)." George Stoney, "National Film Board of Canada: Application for Employment" (tagged as "Canada Application for

- Employment (undated (draft??) 1968??: answer to question 58, p. 4”).
21. Alan Rosenthal, “‘You Are on Indian Land’: George Stoney,” in his *Documentary Conscience*, 345.
 22. Brenda Longfellow, “*The Things I Cannot Change: A Revisionary Reading*,” in Waugh et al., *Challenge for Change*, 149–68, on 149.
 23. Joris Ivens, *The Camera and I* (New York: International Publishers, 1969), 88, n216.
 24. In essence, the family were moved, but pleased to do so having lived in the neighborhood for less than a year. This, though, is without prejudice to the issue of consent. That they were shown the film before transmission and did not object nevertheless speaks to the need for such consent. To be “informed,” one must be provided a full explanation of possible consequences including the impacts of reception (e.g., neighbor hostility).
 25. Rosenthal, “‘You Are on Indian Land,’” in his *Documentary Conscience*, 349.
 26. As with the Fogo films, *You Are on Indian Land* was designed to achieve direct effects. As edited by Kathleen Shannon, it was widely seen by Six Nation peoples living on either side of the border and was, therefore, not only a de facto riposte to the police and local authorities who had been engaged in misrepresenting the protest. It was also to be a serious consciousness-raising organizing tool at this stage of the First Nations struggle for recognition.
 27. Boyle, “O Canada!” in Abrash et al., “Festschrift,” 54.
 28. Tagged: Dec14-68 Libba fGCS047.pdf
 29. Tagged: Nov15-68 Libba fGCS057
 30. Tagged: Jan26-69 Libba fGCS036.pdf
 31. Dorothy Todd Hénaut, “George Stoney: The Johnny Appleseed of Documentary” (tagged as “Henaut, 2001”).
 32. Klein, “Toasts and Tributes,” in Abrash et al., “Festschrift,” 154.
 33. Brian Winston, *Technologies of Seeing* (London: BFI, 1996), 66–67.
 34. Tagged: “To Be Done pdf,” scan 68.
 35. Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).
 36. Tagged: “To Be Done pdf,” scan 63. Stoney had married a British woman, Mary Bruce, whom he had met when stationed in England during World War II but was divorced from her in 1961. They were, however, still in contact primarily over the care of their three children. “Prof” and “Matron” were James and Edna Bruce, Mary’s parents, who lived in Oxford, UK.
 37. Tagged: Oct5-69 Libba f.GCS030.pdf
 38. Tagged: “To Be Done pdf,” scan 241. Elsewhere Stoney describes his divorce as “civilised” and there are numerous letters to Mary.
 39. Waugh and Winton, “Challenges for Change,” in Winston, *Documentary Film Book*, 138.
 40. Tagged: “To Be Done pdf,” scan 310.
 41. Tagged: Oct15-70 GCS f.Spiller024
 42. Interview with Terry McCartney-Filgate, Toronto, May 2012. (This was conducted by Barbara Evens and the writer.)
 43. Tagged: Oc5-69 Libba f.GCS030.pdf
 44. Tagged: Feb5-71 Dorothy f.GCS023.pdf
 45. Tagged: 29.4.71 AMC starting.
 46. Tagged as: Mar 23-71 to Matron/Profo20.pdf. Stoney is credited with the “co-founding” of the Alternate Media Center (AMC), for instance, by Boyle, “O Lucky Man!,” in Abrash et al., “Festschrift,” 16. The letters, however, do not readily support the notion that the idea for the AMC came from more than one source. It was, arguably, Stoney’s alone, but being a person who, as Boyle notes, wanted to be remembered as a “happy collaborator” (of unbounded modesty) (ibid., 17), any impression otherwise was never countered. In consequence, Mrs. “Red” Burns, the ex-NFB intern whose “tremendous assist” was to earn her the directorship of the AMC, is commonly credited with its co-foundation. Her role in securing this grant was crucial, as Stoney acknowledged. In a letter to his daughter, he amplifies the exact nature of the “tremendous assist” she provided. (to Louise Stoney, “Lulu,” March 23, 1971. Tagged: “To Be Done. Pdf,” scan 153). Stoney anyway was necessarily distracted by his own film work and his professorial duties. (He was an extraordinarily assiduous teacher; for example, visiting student documentary crews on location whenever possible.) In the letter to Dale, he was already hinting at differences of opinion between himself and Burns.
 47. Burns was to take the AMC in a more highly technologized direction than Stoney had in mind. She founded the Interactive Telecommunications Program at NYU and the community access focus became obscured. By 1984, Stoney was still happy to acknowledge they had “set up the AMC together” even as he regretted what she had done to it. (Please see letter in insert.)
 48. Patrick Parsons, *Blue Skies: A History of Cable Television* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 701.
 49. Ibid., 375.
 50. Ibid., 374.
 51. Nick Johnson, “Did George Stoney Invent YouTube?” (2012), wacity.patch.com/groups/Nicholas-johnsons-blog/p/bp-did-george-stoney-invent-youtube.